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MEMORIAL

TO THE

Fifty-Fourth General Assembly of Tennessee

REGARDING THE

COLLECTION

OF THE

Tennessee Historical Society

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MEMORIAL TO THE FIFTY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF TENNESSEE REGARDING THE COLLECTION OF THE TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

To the Honorable, the Fifty-fourth General Assembly of the State of Tennessee:

The undersigned, your memorialists, respectfully represent that they are members of the Tennessee Historical Society, and are acting as a committee thereof under instructions to petition your honorable bodies to provide a suitable depository and to take and preserve, as a great and valued trust, the important archæological and historical collections which the Society has accumulated and now finds itself unable properly to care for.

Organization and Purpose of the Society.

Your memorialists respectfully represent that the Tennessee Historical Society was originally organized, as a voluntary association, in 1849, and was active in prosecuting the ordinary duties of a State historical society until 1861, under the leadership of such men as Nathaniel Cross, A. W. Putnam (the historian of Middle Tennessee), William F. Cooper, and others who accumulated a considerable proportion of the valuable materials which the Society now possesses.

In 1874 the Society was reorganized, with J. G. M. Ramsey, of Knoxville, one of the most prominent of the State's historians, as president; John M. Lea, as vice president; and Anson Nelson, as secretary—men whose public spirit and State pride and interest in and knowledge of history, especially State and local, eminently qualified them for their positions.

In July, 1875, under the general incorporation law of the State (bearing date of March 23, 1875, and providing, among other things, for the organization of corporations "for the support of a historical society"), the Tennessee Historical Society was granted a charter of incorporation—"not for individual profit," but for the "general welfare of the Society," and with the general purpose, specifically expressed, "to collect, preserve, and perpetuate facts and events connected with the history of Tennessee."

Diligence and Success in Collecting.

Your memorialists further respectfully represent that the Society has ever been diligent in pursuing the purposes of its organization. In particular, it has accumulated a large and valuable collection of original documents, portraits, and antiquarian and archæological objects setting forth and illustrat-

ing the history of the State from aboriginal times to the present. These collections include portraits of the Presidents whom the State has furnished to the Union and of most of the Governors, from William Blount down; State documents; letters and narratives of early pioneers, statesmen, and scholars; original contributions to history and biography; and archæological objects typical of this region, in which are found examples of flints and pottery unexcelled by the aboriginal remains in any other part of the United States. These items, too numerous to mention in detail, are set forth in Exhibits "B," "C," and "D," which have been laid before your honorable bodies and to which your attention is respectfully directed.

Richness and Value of the Collection.

The richness of the collection may be illustrated by the mention of rare examples of aboriginal pottery in conventionalized animal shapes, of ceremonial flints seventeen inches long, and of documents such as the "Proposed Constitution of the State of Franklin;" "The Journals of the Territorial Government of the Territory South of the Ohio River under Governor William Blount;" "Treaties between the United States and Indian Tribes in and adjacent to the State;" "The Diary of John Donelson," who led the families of the early settlers of Nashville by boat from East Tennessee to their destination; "The Early Records of the County of Washington, in East Tennessee;" and "The Cumberland Compact," or the original articles of government agreed to by the early settlers on the Cumberland River. Barely one of these many valuable documents exists in duplicate, and very few have ever been printed. They exist in these sole and singular forms only; they would be irreplaceable if destroyed; and without them, important facts of the State's history cannot be written and illustrated. For the members of the Tennessee Historical Society your memorialists know, and for the people of the State they believe, that the careless loss of one of them would be condemned as gross negligence and the willful destruction or disposal of them as a most unpatriotic act.

In the true and proper sense they are invaluable, beyond valuation. Yet by comparison with similar objects as they are bought and sold among collectors and dealers in antiquities, it is possible to put a commercial valuation upon them with some degree of approximation. By a gentleman, a member of the Society and well acquainted with its collections, who is a man of recognized business judgment and who is a dealer in such objects, your memorialists are informed that, in his judgment, a collector in the United States to-day might spend $100,000 and still not accumulate so rich and choice a collection as that which the Tennessee Historical Society has accumulated and now possesses.

Gift
Garner Inst.

Patriotism of Contributors.

It is needless for your memorialists to assure your honorable bodies that the Tennessee Historical Society has expended no such remarkable sum in accumulating its collection; on the contrary, because citizens of the State appreciated the value to the State of the objects which they had and because they had confidence in the patriotism of the Society and its purpose to preserve such things in trust for the citizens of the State in generations to come, they have given them to the Society in free and full ownership, voluntarily or, sometimes, after solicitation. Very rarely indeed have any holders insisted upon being paid a purchase price.

This, as your memorialists believe, will be sufficient to prove due diligence on the part of the Society in the work of collection.

Diligence in Caring for the Treasures.

As to the exercise of due care and foresight for the preservation of these valuable objects, your memorialists respectfully submit that the Society has always been diligent; but it is, and always has been, financially weak, and now finds itself utterly inadequate to the task of caring properly for them.

Soon after the Society was first organized—namely, in 1857—the General Assembly of the State, by joint resolution, extended to it the use of so much room in the Library as it needed. Of this notable recognition and favor on the part of the predecessors of your honorable bodies the Society gladly availed itself with expressions of appreciation. In that room, then, the objects which the Society then had were stored. There the collection grew, there it survived the period of the Civil War intact, and there it remained until 1886. By that time it had increased to very considerable proportions. Neither at that time nor since has the State had an historical collection or museum of its own to which the Society's collection could be attached under the watchcare of a State custodian. Moreover, the State Library was then strong and active and growing, and there was no room for the Society.

So, at this juncture, the Society gladly accepted the offer of the Watkins Institute trustees, who were also prominent among its members, and removed its collection to the Watkins Institute Building. In this building the Society has ever since stored its collection, and has maintained an historical and archæological museum freely open to the public, being materially assisted in so doing by the Watkins Institute trustees, who, in the expenditure of the income of the funds which they hold in trust for public uses, have freely and generously placed a large and excellent room at the service of the Society, without expense for rent or heat or light.

The Watkins Institute Building was then new and considered of standard construction; nor were the buildings adjacent so close or put to such dangerous uses as those now standing nearest to it. It is now considered, by reason of its construction and surroundings, one of the greatest fire risks in the city, and the insurance rates charged upon it and its contents are from four to five times as great per thousand as those upon an ordinary brick dwelling and its contents.

Inability of the Society to Protect its Collections.

In view of these changed conditions, the Society has become very much concerned for the safety of its collections, and jealous lest, by leaving them where they may some unfortunate day be irreparably destroyed, it should be judged unfaithful to the patriotic public trust it has voluntarily assumed.

But your memorialists on behalf of the Tennessee Historical Society are compelled by necessity to say, and hereby respectfully represent, that the Society is financially incapable of giving to its collections the care and protection which they ought, without question, to have. Its resources, consisting of the dues of members and the income from a small bequest made to the Society by the late Mr. M. H. Howard, amount to less than $300 per annum, and are more than exhausted by the necessary current expenses for janitor and custodian service; for stationery, postage, and printing; for insurance; and in the purchase of one hundred copies of the American Historical Magazine, which are used to exchange with various historical and learned societies for their valuable publications. It has not even funds to prosecute vigorously the work of collection, much less the means to build or rent a suitable fireproof building or room in which to deposit its treasures and to maintain a public museum. For nearly twenty years it has accepted the generous hospitality of the Watkins Institute trustees: but, without prejudice to their public-spirited action in the circumstances, your memorialists respectfully submit that the best these gentlemen have to offer is insufficient to meet the present needs of the Society.

Appeal to the State for Aid.

Clearly the Tennessee Historical Society, in order still to exercise due diligence in the care of its collections, must prosecute a determined search in some direction for outside assistance. Such being the circumstances, the Society believes, and your memorialists are instructed respectfully to represent to your honorable bodies, that it is to the State of Tennessee that it should first look for aid in caring for these objects which it has collected out of regard for the history of the

State and which are and will continue to be of more historical and sentimental interest to the people of this State than to any one else.

Therefore your memorialists, in behalf of the Tennessee Historical Society, respectfully memorialize and petition your honorable bodies:

The Collections Offered to the State.

First, to take and hold the collections which the Society now has and hereafter, from time to time, may accumulate; caring for and preserving them as like objects, the property of the State, are cared for and preserved; cataloguing and filing them in the same manner as its own archives are catalogued and filed; exhibiting certain illustrative and instructive documents in the collection in a public historical and archæological museum; and allowing the access of proper parties to them under suitable precautions, distinguishing them from its own only by some characteristic mark which shall indicate the relation of the Historical Society to them—a relation in which the Society does, and ever will, take great pride.

On its part the Tennessee Historical Society offers freely to turn over its collections to the State to hold in trust and perpetual deposit as soon as the State shall provide a suitable fireproof depository and museum and a State archivist properly authorized to receive them and to act as custodian of them.

On its part, further, the Tennessee Historical Society desires and intends that, should it ever dissolve, its collections should become the property of the State in full ownership; and if, in order properly to accomplish this, any legislation amendatory of its charter should be thought necessary, it stands ready to accept heartily all such changes.

The Society desires to maintain its organization and activity, believing that there will be work for it to do within the scope of its purpose as expressed in its charter and desiring to be engaged and have a part in the work of promoting knowledge of the history of the State of Tennessee and cultivating pride and interest therein among the present and the future generations.

But your memorialists believe that in asking your honorable bodies to make provision for the acceptance of the collections of the Tennessee Historical Society in trust on the conditions indicated, they are not asking all that, as public-spirited citizens, it is at this time their privilege and their duty to ask.

State Department of Archives and History.

In the second place, therefore, they make bold to suggest the propriety and importance of enacting, and they hereby

respectfully do memorialize your honorable bodies to enact, into law some such measure as House Bill No. 69 (introduced by Representative Mellen, of Knox County), providing for the creation of a permanent State Department of Archives and History, with a State director in charge, after the model of the departments now for several years successfully operated in the adjacent States of Alabama and Mississippi.

Such an officer in charge of such a department would be an appropriate officer to become the custodian of the collections which the Society is asking the State to take care of for it; and, considering the character and value of these collections, your memorialists believe that it is not unbecoming in them, even though they are petitioners, thus to indicate the dignity of position and scope of powers of the officer worthy to be intrusted with documents which are of such value to the State.

Scope of the Director's Activities.

Such an officer would be in position to carry on the work of collecting historical material still in private hands far beyond anything which the Historical Society has been able to do hitherto. Such an officer would deserve and would be cheerfully given all the assistance in this work which it is at all possible for the Historical Society to afford by its coöperation with him.

Hitherto, in default of such a State officer, all that has been done in the way of systematic effort to collect the documentary and illustrative history of the State and to preserve it carefully and properly has been done by the Tennessee Historical Society and other societies with similar historic and patriotic purposes and similarly composed of private individuals with public-spirited pride and interest in such matters. The success of the Society in making collections in the past has been set forth. At present it is embarrassed in the prosecution of this work by its inability to offer and guarantee safe and suitable care of the materials that would, under proper conditions, be readily forthcoming. Indeed, your memorialists are well assured that there are many documents, newspaper files, etc., still in private hands which a State officer, properly equipped, would be able to procure and to preserve from the very many causes of loss to which they are now constantly exposed.

It is well known that the late Lyman C. Draper gathered a large amount of choice material relating to the history of Tennessee, and especially to those of its citizens who took part in the memorable campaign of King's Mountain, and carried it with him to Wisconsin. After using it, in default of any public depository in this State, he at length deposited it there with the Wisconsin Historical Society. These documents are still there, with very many more of a similar char-

acter, well cared for in a building erected at a cost of $600,000 by the State of Wisconsin for the society. Individuals in this State, local historical societies, and the patriotic societies—including the Colonial Dames, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the Confederacy, the Sons of the Revolution, the Confederate Veterans, the United Sons of the Confederate Veterans, and the Grand Army of the Republic—are all more or less active in this work; and your memorialists are advised that many—if not, indeed, all—of them would coöperate most heartily with a State archivist in his efforts to make collections. Moreover, they firmly believe that efforts directed by such a central and authorized public official would accomplish much more than the uncoördinated efforts of individuals and societies could accomplish.

In particular, the ladies' patriotic societies are active, among other ways, in locating and marking historic sites. The Confederate Veterans and the Grand Army of the Republic Camps in the State are concerned in the effort of the national government to secure and publish a complete roster of the soldiers and sailors of the Civil War on both sides. Many of the muster rolls are known to exist and to be in private hands; but the individuals who possess and cherish them are unwilling to part with them even temporarily at the request of individuals, though it is believed that a State officer would be able to procure them.

The State Records.

But if the existing private agencies have failed to do what ought to be done in the way of collecting material in private hands for lack of means and influence, leaving so much that must be brought to the attention of your honorable bodies with the respectful request that provision be made to take up the work by proper State authority, there is still another very important field which individuals and quasi-private organizations have had no right to enter—namely, the field of the records of the State government and of the local governments subject to its control. To these your memorialists beg leave to call your attention.

In each State and local office, as is well known, the more recent records must be kept within reach for consultation in the transaction of current business. As time passes on and the records accumulate, the older ones are moved farther and farther back, until they are at length crowded off the shelves and out of the vaults into closets, storerooms, and basements, where, in too many cases, the officer to whose department they belong no longer has direct access to and control over them. It is at this point in their existence that, for lack of a proper officer to look after them, they become exposed to many and active destructive agencies. It is a matter of common report

that county officers have ordered all county records to be burned to make room for the new. It too frequently happens that the records in county courthouses which have been crowded out of the vaults have been lost by the burning of the buildings. The archives of the State, at the Capitol, which up to two years ago had been relegated to the basement to relieve the pressure for room in the various offices, were found to be perishing piece by piece, when their condition was called to the attention of the Governor. At different times, in the course of visits to the basement by those most familiar with the State records, whether to conduct a piece of investigation for themselves or to get information for visiting or corresponding historians from a distance or to look for old documents unexpectedly called for by the State's officers, such incidents as the following have occurred: The engrossed copy of the Constitution of 1796 was rescued from an ash barrel; the engrossed copy of the Constitution of 1834 was taken out of a barrel of disinfecting sand; correspondence of Governor McMinn's administration relating to the extinguishment of Indian titles to land, which had been exposed to water and had been reduced almost to a pulpy state, were rescued from the janitor's shovel just as he was on the point of throwing them away; the maps and documents relating to the Tennessee-Virginia boundary were found too late for use, when, had they been accessible to start with, an examination of them would have secured without litigation what, for the lack of them, the State was only able to secure after the expenditure of $30,000 in conducting a suit before the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Care Now Given to the Tennessee State Records.

Your memorialists would further support their petition that a Department of Archives and History be created, charged with the proper care of the State's records, as well as with the other duties named, by recalling to your attention what has already been done through the personal interest of Governors McMillin and Frazier; through the interest and foresight of the Capitol Commission in fitting up space in the attic, the only place where any room at all could be found; through the action of the Fifty-third General Assembly in making an appropriation for the salary of an archivist for two years; and through the work which this officer has accomplished. The old records in the office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court have been removed to the attic and put into the custody of the archivist, who has given bonds for their safe custody and who has sorted and arranged them so that any record can be found in a moment's time. The documents which were so rapidly wasting in the basement under the action of the elements to which they were there exposed have been removed to the at-

tic, where the archivist is engaged in assorting them. In the prosecution of this work he is almost daily finding documents of much interest and importance, and is already able to render much assistance, not only to the student of history, but to officers of the State, members of the bar, and citizens whose rights are dependent upon information to be found in these old documents. What has thus been done is, as your memorialists believe, but the promising beginning of much that may be done.

Model State Departments of Archives and History.

Your memorialists would further support their request by reference to what the States of Alabama and Mississippi have done in recent years through their Departments of Archives and History. The documents which have been laid before your honorable bodies and the statements made by the archivists of these States (upon whom your honorable bodies conferred a great distinction by their invitation to address them in joint assembly on Tuesday, January 10, last) render it unnecessary to go into details here. They have arranged, filed, and catalogued State documents so that they can be quickly found, however ancient they may be; they have accumulated much manuscript and printed matter important to the history of their States; they have located and marked historic sites within their States; they have stimulated research through the State historical societies, which contain a large number of members, many of them graduates of the State University, who are steadily engaged in the study of the State history and who regularly present between twenty and thirty original articles of historical nature at each annual meeting of the Historical Society as the result of the year's work.

The success, and especially the form of organization, of the Departments of Archives and History in these States has attracted wide attention and general commendation. The American Historical Association—a body of about 2,500 members, with an annual income of over $7,000 from dues, supporting liberally its own Historical Review, having an endowment of $20,000, and maintaining an annual prize of $100 in American history and a biennial prize of $200 in European history—at its recent meeting in Chicago, on motion of Prof. Albert Bushnell Hart, of Harvard University, passed unanimously a resolution indorsing and commending these organizations by name; and the result of the vote on the resolution, when it was formally announced by the president, was received with spontaneous applause. (See Exhibit "J.")

Your memorialists believe that no more suitable form of organization could be found to meet the needs of the situation in Tennessee at this time; and, moved by interest in historical matters, by public spirit, and by State pride, they beg leave respectfully to commend it to the careful consideration

of your honorable bodies, trusting that it may be found worthy of adoption by the State of Tennessee at this time. However, they beg leave further to submit a number of documents in Exhibit "K," which will indicate what other States have also done.

The Need for a New State Building.

Thirdly, the overcrowded condition of every part of the Capitol is a matter of public knowledge. The lack of space in the Library was reason for the retirement of the Historical Society from that room nearly twenty years ago. It certainly could not now expect to be received back there. A visit to the present archives room in the attic will show at a glance the unsuitableness of these quarters for workrooms for those who need to consult the documents there, much less to serve for the display of an educative exhibit of the documents illustrating the State's history where the public could enjoy access to it. His Excellency, Governor Frazier, in his message to your honorable bodies, has called attention, as the late Governor Turney did eight years ago, to the public need for additional room in a separate building to meet the needs of the State's officers in the transaction of public business.

While your memorialists could not with propriety ask your honorable bodies to undertake the expenditure of a large sum of money for the sake of the Tennessee Historical Society, and while they could hardly expect their prayer regarding the Society's valuable collections to be granted if there were no other place in prospect for storing it than in the already greatly overcrowded Capitol, they fully and firmly believe that the State would be justified in expending a very considerable sum of money at this time to provide adequate room to meet the needs of the public business in the State offices; and in connection therewith they would most respectfully, but most urgently, represent the propriety of providing with some liberality and with a proper view to the future for such things as a museum to display the natural resources of the State when they are such as to attract the attention which the State's display at the recent World's Fair in St. Louis did attract, or for the proper preservation and use of a collection of such value in itself and to the State as the historical and archæological collection of the State Historical Society, or for the proper care of its own records and the promotion of its own history on a scale and in a manner in accord with the recent practice of so many of the States and in proportion to the importance which the American people, and Tennesseans no less than the others, have always attached to the history of their institutions.

The present Capitol has been in use upwards of fifty years; and it would be truly remarkable if the General Assembly

which provided for its erection could have so anticipated the growth of the State, or, anticipating it, could have presumed so to burden its own generation as to have erected a building which, at the end of a half century, would still be ample for the transaction of the public business. It did not do so; and your memorialists are not aware of any instance, State or national, in which such provision for the future was successfully accomplished. The document printed herewith shows, on a conservative estimate, that the officers occupying the present building might have four times the room they now have and yet not be provided with more than prudent men of affairs, engaged in public or private business, would deem necessary to the prompt and orderly transaction of business.* Other documents in the same exhibit setting forth the situation in other States seem to show that the estimate of room needed for the usual officers of State is not excessive; and they show, besides, what provision it is thought necessary to make for the newer departments whose importance is not necessarily the less because it has only recently come to be generally recognized.

The Present Capitol a Monument to the State.

Your memorialists are impressed, as they believe the people of the State and strangers generally are impressed, with the stable structure, the sightly location, and the peculiarly chaste and classic design of the present Capitol. Like the Greek temples, after one of the most famous of which this building is modeled, it gains a part of its stateliness and grandeur from the fact that it stands somewhat isolated and apart. All truly great public buildings are monumental in character. They are esteemed as perpetual monuments in honor of those who are so fortunate as to have participated in their erection. Far higher than that, they also typify the greatness of the resources and the nobility of the institutions of the State which erects them. Your memorialists, therefore, being citizens of Tennessee, taking part in its industry and its arts, representing a very worthy body of its citizens organized to promote public welfare, and not private profit, most respectfully urge your honorable bodies that, in planning for the erection of an additional State building, they have proper regard for the present one, maintaining and, if possible, perfecting the symmetry and proportion of its environment; and your memorialists, in conclusion, beg leave to trust that your honorable bodies, in considering plans for a new building, will not only provide for a structure with ample room and suitable arrangements to meet the anticipated needs of the State, but also for one which, by the appropriateness of its location and the felicity of its design and the beauty of its finish, shall be a worthy monument to those who erect it and

an honor to the people of the State whose representatives they are.

All of which your honorable bodies are most respectfully memorialized to do.

In behalf of the Tennessee Historical Society,

JAMES D. PORTER, President;
ALBERT V. GOODPASTURE,
FREDERICK W. MOORE,
JOSHUA W. CALDWELL,
E. B. STAHLMAN,
JOHN BELL KEEBLE,
W. C. COLLIER,
JOSEPH E. WASHINGTON,
ALBERT G. EWING, Jr.,
JOHN H. DEWITT,
GEORGE F. MELLEN,
G. W. MARTIN,
W. A. COLLIER.

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* Rooms now occupied and also rooms required for the use of the State officers of the State of Tennessee:

Rooms Now Occupied.		*Rooms Needed.*	
Governor	2	Governor	3
Attorney General	0	Attorney General	1
Supreme Court Consultation Room	0	Supreme Court Consultation Room	2
Adjutant General	1	Adjutant General	1
Secretary of State	2	Secretary of State	3
Treasurer	2	Treasurer	2
Insurance Department	0	Insurance Department	2
Comptroller	2	Comptroller	4
Supt. of Public Instruction	1	Supt. of Public Instruction	2
Supt. of Board of Health	1	Supt. of Board of Health	1
Commissioner of Agriculture	1	Commissioner of Agriculture	3
Railroad Commission	0	Railroad Commission	2
Board of Pensions	0	Board of Pensions	2
Land Register	0	Land Register	1
Funding Board	0	Funding Board	1
Mine Inspector	0	Mine Inspector	1
Superintendent of Capitol	0	Superintendent of Capitol	1

(These six last named at present actually occupy the committee rooms of the House of Representatives; but these rooms are required when the Legislatures are in session, and, moreover, are small and unsuited for the purposes of these offices.)

Senate Consultation Rooms	0	Senate Consultation Rooms	4

(The Senate committees, when the Legislatures are in session, are frequently obliged to meet in the Library and also at the rooms of members at the hotel.)

Court of Chancery Appeals	0	Court of Chancery Appeals	1
Archives	0	Archives	5

(One large room would answer for the archives. They are at present stored in the roof of the Capitol, in a room made there recently for the purpose.)

State Board of Medical Examiners	0	State Board of Medical Examiners	1
Board of Law Examiners	0	Board of Law Examiners	1
Board of Pharmacy	0	Board of Pharmacy	1
Board of Charities	0	Board of Charities	1
Inspector of Shops and Factories	0	Inspector of Shops and Factories	1

(Possibly the Medical, Pharmacy and Dental Boards could be united so as to use the same rooms. In that event they would not require as many as stated above.)

The Library is overcrowded.

The Court of Chancery Appeals, when the Supreme Court is in session, is obliged to sit in the Supreme Court Room in the *afternoons*.

The Senate has no committee rooms whatsoever, and both the Senate and House of Representatives ought to have committee rooms, provided with fires, in the annex building, where they can meet at night to work during the session.

There is no armory, and in the new building there ought to be a floor exclusively for an armory.

The Historical Society has no place. There should by all means be provided rooms both elegant and fireproof for that Society.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 014 648 124 3

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 014 648 124 3